

Kassouf Homers Twice, ASU Belts Bulldogs

Written by Mike Flynn

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Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) homered twice to lead Appalachian State University baseball to a series-clinching 9-4 win over The Citadel on Saturday afternoon at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. With the victory, Appalachian (16-3, 5-0 SoCon) moved to

10-0 at home this season and clinched its first series victory over The Citadel (8-10, 1-4 SoCon) since 2005.

Kassouf led off the second and fifth innings with solo homers and finished 3-for-4 with three runs scored to pace the Mountaineers' nine-run, 12-hit attack. His line-drive blast to left field sparked a six-run second inning that gave ASU a lead it would never relinquish while he went opposite field for his Southern Conference-high-tying eighth home run of the season in fifth. With his 3-for-4 afternoon at the plate, Kassouf upped his batting average to a team-best .400. The red-hot senior designated hitter has hit safely in 10 of the last 11 games and has four home runs in the last four contests.

Prompted by Kassouf's leadoff blast, Appalachian erased a 2-0 deficit with the six-run second inning and never looked back. In addition to Kassouf's bomb, Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) had two RBI and Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan), Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) and Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) all drove in single runs in the second to help give ASU a commanding 6-2 lead.

Troutman drove in his second run of the afternoon with an RBI double in the third and Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) followed Kassouf's second home run with an RBI groundout in the fifth to close out the scoring for the Mountaineers, which have won 14 of their last 15 ballgames.

Starting pitcher Seth Grant (Etowah, N.C./West Henderson) battled through a rough first inning to go six strong stanzas, allowing four runs on just five hits to move to 3-1 on the season. Three Mountaineer relievers combined to hold the Bulldogs hitless over the final three frames.

Appalachian jumped all over The Citadel starter Bryce Hines and chased the right-hander after just 2.2 innings. Hines surrendered seven runs on eight hits to fall to 0-1. Joe Jackson and Justin Mackert combined for four of the Bulldogs' five hits with two apiece.

The Mountaineers go for their first-ever three-game series sweep over The Citadel on Sunday when the teams conclude their weekend set at Smith Stadium. First pitch is set for 1 p.m.

NOTES: Appalachian has never swept a three-game series from The Citadel but did win both ends of two-game sets in 1973, 1974 and 1978 ... the Mountaineers are 5-0 in SoCon play for the first time since 1978, when they won their first seven conference games ... Zupcic went 1-for-4 to extend his hitting streak to 12 games, ASU's longest of the season ... Callaway went 2-for-5 to stretch his hitting streak to 10 games ... Kassouf and Callaway have both recorded multiple hits in nine of the last 14 ballgames ... Saturday's attendance of 788 on a mostly overcast afternoon was Appalachian's second-largest of the season, despite the fact that ASU students are on spring break.

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Photo Courtesy: Daniel Kassouf, ASU Athletics